

Ten Mile Creek
A Model for Merging
Everglades Restoration with Recreation

Ten Mile Creek is a picturesque tributary to the headwaters of the North Fork of the St. Lucie River Aquatic Preserve, which is one of the last remaining freshwater/estuarine wilderness

C R E D I T S

WaterMatters is produced by the South Florida Water Management District’s Department of Public Information to inform the public about District projects and programs. An internet version is also available in English and Spanish at www.sfwmd.gov

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.

areas in this part of Florida. Portions of this precious estuary and the downstream Indian River Lagoon are designated as Outstanding Florida Waters.

The Ten Mile Creek Water Preserve Area project was designated as a “critical project” of the Everglades restoration program because it could provide immediate, independent and substantial environmental restoration benefits.

A unique partnership with St. Lucie County, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the District is helping to ensure that the project also provides the community with recreational opportunities. Project engineers worked with representatives from local governments and communities, looking for ways to incorporate recreational access while accomplishing vital restoration goals.

“Projects like this are teaching us that these goals – combining recreational access and restoration – are well within our reach when each partner contributes,” said Henry Dean, the District’s executive director. “Experiencing nature teaches us all to value it,” Dean added.

A RECREATIONAL PLANNING PARTNERSHIP
For more than a year St. Lucie County worked closely with the District and the Corps of Engineers. “It was nice to see this project develop into one that successfully integrated so many compatible purposes,” said Don West, St. Lucie County Public Works Director. County funding helped make a variety of recreational activities possible.

When gopher tortoises were discovered on the site, their scrub habitat area was set aside to protect them, also creating opportunities for bird watching and hiking. A nearby small lake offers year-round fishing and passive boating. In the near future, a canoe launching site will be added to this quiet stretch of Ten Mile Creek.

Visitors will also find an equestrian center with environmentally friendly



An archaeological dig unearths history.

restrooms and a group shelter. Benches along the trail will invite visitors to linger.

St. Lucie County helped relocate native pines, oaks and cabbage palms from the project’s construction site to the proposed recreational areas. Local Girl Scouts and the Explorer’s Post helped preserve hundreds of native plants from these same areas by repotting them for later replanting.

The farthest western section of the site, once an orange grove, was oddly shaped and not suited for restoration. The area will now include more space for launching canoes or camping. A footbridge will provide a peaceful path for campers leading to tree-shrouded campsites and a group shelter nestled along the creek.

In the middle of the site, Everglades restoration will dominate. Engineers will build several miles of levees around a reservoir that will hold water up to 10 feet deep. Water will then be moved into a vegetated storm water treatment area to improve water quality. The tops of the levees enclosing these facilities will serve as unpaved roadways and trails.

UNEARTHING HISTORIC TREASURES
Early in the year, workers found signs of archaeological treasures. One site has already been excavated, yielding evidence of earlier inhabitants. The western reaches of the area hold three more sites.

The people of St. Lucie County worked closely with the Ten Mile Creek planners and are unearthing recreational, educational, ecological and historical treasures. Thanks to this working partnership, these land gems will be largely owned and managed by the county and its citizens.



Correction

In our last issue, the photograph at left was identified as being in Miami. It actually shows a structure and canal in West Palm Beach.



Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.

Q. I’ve heard that water managers are looking forward to a season filled with much-needed tropical storms. Why would you want big storms to hit the area?

A. We don’t want damaging winds or rain, but, the big storms of the rainy season help to supplement our year-round water supplies. Without those seasonal rains, our water supplies could be quickly stretched to the limit.

Florida is almost completely dependent on rainfall for our drinking water. Most of the water we drink, bathe in, and wash our clothes and dishes with comes from wells drawing water from underground aquifers. That groundwater is only replenished or refilled by rain. Those day-long rains that can make driving difficult and the day seem gloomy are perfect for slowly soaking into the soils and gradually making its way to the aquifers beneath us.

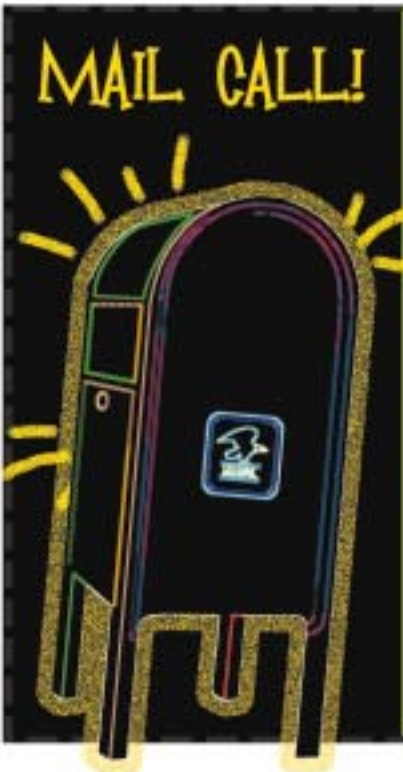
So, the next time you’re tempted to be depressed at a forecast for summer showers, remember: Summer rains are liquid treasure – ensuring clean, affordable water is there when we need it!

Who is Freddy?

His full name is “Freddy the Friendly Alligator.” He is the South Florida Water Management District’s mascot.

You may have seen him on the signs that mark the region’s canals and rivers.

Alligators are nature’s water managers, and are what most people picture when they think about Florida. Alligators dig deep holes in the swamp where they “hang out.” When drought strikes, these “gator holes” provide water and food (fish, turtles, insects) for many other species such as wading birds. At the same time, any creature sharing the alligator’s territory could become its lunch! That’s why people should remember that alligators are wild animals which should be admired, but also avoided.



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